



pRide



SUMMER 2000

THE NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR

RHODE ISLAND STATE EMPLOYEES

The Changing Face of State Personnel Offices

The changing face of state Personnel Offices is both extensive and inherently vital to the survival of each agency. This change is demonstrated vividly in the differences between the 3rd (1996) and 4th (2000) edition of *State Personnel Office: Roles and Functions* published by the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE).

- In the 4th edition there was a stated decrease in the number of appointments by a governor, and a balancing increase in the number appointed by department heads and selection boards.
- The minimum salary and maximum salary of personnel executives increased at an overall rate of 11.4% and 15.4% respectively from 1996 to 2000.
- The state budget appropriations given to Personnel Departments has increased from about \$42 million in 1996 to over \$57 million in 2000.
- The 3rd edition has no specialized chapter referring to automation in the offices. The 4th edition has a new focus including dealing with HRMIS (Human Resource Management Information System). The report states that over 86% of systems have been at least partially automated; of which 56% are considered incomplete.
- The numbers of classifications per state continue to vary more extensively between maximum and minimum numbers. In 1996 Kansas had the low of 762 classifications while New Jersey had the high with 6,169. In 2000 Kansas again had the low of 739, while New Jersey again had the high of 8,300 classifications. The average number of classifications for all states is 1886.
- In the 4th edition temporary employees are shown to have more prominence in the workplace, accounting for an average of over 6,000 per state. Twenty percent of the states give benefits to temporary workers.
- The number of assessment centers has continued a decreasing trend, from 16 centers in 1996 to just 11 in 2000.
- There is a marked increase in the number of private vendors utilized to run training sessions, indicating a renewed emphasis on career development.
- The number of states that offer training in areas such as management supervisory skills, sexual harassment, computer skills, and diversity, has increased dramatically. In 1996, 33 states offered training, while in 2000, 45 states now offer training in these areas.
- In performance evaluations there has been a distinct shift towards flexibility. Twenty-three states enhance flexibility by allowing the particular agency to customize their evaluation system.

• Seniority remains the number one factor in importance making RIF (Reduction In Force) decisions, while performance ratings are a newly established second factor.

• There is a continued increased focus on telecommuting in the everyday workplace with the continued advancement of computers.

Mark Tregar, Student Intern
Rhode Island Department of Administration
June 2000

DLT is on the move!

Capping a three and a half year process of renovating long-abandoned state property, the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) has begun to occupy its new headquarters on Pontiac Avenue in the Howard Complex in Cranston. Four of the buildings in the six-building complex are now fully occupied as staffs from across the state settle into their new surroundings.



Construction nears completion at the Center General, the new headquarters for the Department of Labor and Training.

The five historical buildings of native granite ashlar stone have been resurrected to their former glory and married with a new building to create the Center General Complex. In April, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission recognized Center General with an Historic Preservation Award, stating: "Vision and determination transformed the State Alms house from an abandoned white elephant into state of the art office space for the Department of Labor and Training. This highly cost effective rehabilitation serves as a model for future reclamation of redundant buildings on the Howard Campus in Cranston."

Centralizing several DLT offices on state-owned property not only saves valuable tax dollars by reducing rent expenditures and overhead, but it also offers more comprehensive services from a single site. We encourage you to visit our new location when construction is complete and all officers are fully functional, estimated to be August, 2000.



FROM THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Executive Orders

- 00-3 4-06-00** RI Select Commission on Race & Police-Community Relations
- 00-4 4-07-00** Promotion of a Diverse State Government Workforce
- 00-5 5-25-00** Insurance Task Force Membership
- 00-6 5-31-00** Creation of Dam Safety & Maintenance Task-Force

For more information or copies of Executive Orders, call the **Office of the Executive Counsel, 222-2050, Ext. 258.**

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Deadline for contributions to the Fall Open Enrollment issue is October 15, 2000.

The State of Rhode Island is an equal opportunity employer and reasonable accommodations will be provided. For assistance, call EEO Office at 222-3990. (TDD 222-6144).

R.I. Chapter IPMA Seeks New Members

The Rhode Island Chapter of the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA), is a nonprofit organization whose aim is to provide current and beneficial information in the field of personnel administration. The goal is to provide continuing education and training opportunities to personnel professionals. Membership offers the opportunity to network at the local level and to meet with other professionals to discuss current issues and resolve problems that arise in the daily practice of the profession.

Membership is available to any person who is interested in improved personnel management in public employment and whose experience has enabled them to cooperate in the advancement of professionalism and knowledge in public personnel. Students in institutions of higher education whose studies include personnel administration are also eligible for membership.

Membership activities include lively and informative chapter meetings scheduled on a regular basis. These include workshops and seminars, as well as round table discussions, which allow members an opportunity to meet with colleagues and exchange ideas. Three scholarships (\$250.00 each) were randomly given this year to members who have children entering college.

"The RI Sound", the RI IPMA newsletter, has articles on upcoming Chapter activities, new members, current personnel issues and events of other personnel professionals.

Participation on numerous committees allows members an opportunity to influence chapter programs and activities, and enhances the benefits received from membership.

Annual dues are \$15.00. Membership year is from July 1 through June 30.

If you would like to become a member of the RI Chapter of IPMA, complete and clip the following application form, and forward it with your check for \$15.00 to RI Chapter IPMA, P.O. Box 28465, Providence, RI 02908.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP		Referred by:
International Personnel Management Association		
Rhode Island Chapter		Name
New Member _____		Department
Renewal Membership _____		
Name _____	Title _____	
Employer _____		
Office Mailing Address _____		
Street Address _____	Room Number _____	
City _____	State _____	Zip Code _____
Office Phone Number _____	Email Address _____	
Annual Dues: \$15.00		
(Checks payable to RI Chapter IPMA) Signature _____		Date _____

OTD Training Courses Summer

July		Fee
6	Desktop Publishing with Pagemaker	\$ 40
11	Introduction to Windows 95	65
14	Introduction to Personal Computers	40
18	Introduction to Access	65
26	Refining Business and Technical Writing Skills	40
August		
1	Introduction to Access	65
2	Effective Hiring Interviewing Techniques	20
2	Getting Your New Employee Started Right — Strategies for Beginning with New Hires and Transfers	20
8	Access Level II	65
10	Introduction to Powerpoint	65
21	Effective Staff Meetings	20
21	Time Management	20
September		
14 & 15	Introduction to Microsoft Excel (Course 1 — Sept. 14. Course 2 — Sept. 15)	110

For more information call the Office of Training and Development (OTD) at 222-2877. For hearing impaired, TDD 222-6144.

pRIde in performance

Zambarano Resident's Poetry Part of International Exhibit

Zambarano resident **Terry Medberry** writes poetry. How good are his poems? Good enough to qualify him for entry in an international exhibit at the United Nations Hall in New York City; after which, the exhibit will travel to Brazil, France, Vietnam, Australia and Japan.

Terry's poem "My Gardinia", is one of ten poems selected from among all U.S. entries. The exhibit includes 100 poems and 100 paintings incorporating a heart motif. The international exhibit, titled "One Heart, One World" celebrates the "barrier-free heart", and is sponsored by Japan Broadcasting Company and UNESCO, in cooperation with organizations working with people with disABILITIES in the U.S. and overseas.

"The exhibit is intended to assist those with a limited sensitivity or understanding towards the welfare of persons with disABILITIES to reach a fuller and deeper comprehension of, and thereby have a greater empathy for, individuals with disABILITIES."

Medberry has written many poems for the Very Special Arts Rhode Island annual poetry competition, and in 1965, his poem "Wallum Lake, The Lake I Love", captured first place. Here is Terry's poem, now in the international exhibit.

My Gardinia

Met her,
Got to know her just by hanging out.
Buy her a soda,
Had my doubts.

Talked about our days,
Just enjoying each other.
As we spent time together,
Getting to know one another.

My feelings became deeper,
I began to love.
Talked to close friends
Who responded that it was...
Better to have loved than
To have never loved at all.

Told her about my feelings,
She shared hers too.
We knew we had something special
But there was nothing I could do.

Being where I am
I knew I'd go nowhere.
With me loving her...
From my chair.

State Worker Captures Miss Rhode Island Title



Miss Rhode Island USA, Yanaiza Alvarez

The first weekend in June 2000 will forever be etched in the memory of one young lady from Providence. That was the weekend of the Miss Rhode Island Pageant held at the Martin Junior High School in East Providence.

Chosen from among forty-one contestants, Miss **Yanaiza Alvarez** will represent Rhode Island at the Miss USA nationally televised pageant in February 2001.

Born in Cuba, the twenty-three year old beauty is the daughter of Jesus and Mirta Alvarez. The Alvarez' have another daughter, sixteen-year-old Yanet.

Miss Rhode Island USA is a Rhode Island College graduate with a bachelor's degree in Social Work, and she is pursuing a second degree in elementary education at Rhode Island College.

She is currently employed by the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority as a Default Prevention/Collection Agent.

Her life ambition is to become an elementary school teacher, and to work towards increasing literacy among inner city youth.

Congratulations Miss Rhode Island USA! We wish you every success in 2001, as you proudly represent the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the Miss USA Pageant.

State Allowed Greater Flexibility to Serve the Needs of Rhode Island Workers

The Workforce Investment Office of DLT is proud to announce that their strategic plan for Rhode Island for the new Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was approved. The five-year plan was submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor's Washington Office and the Regional Office in Boston days before the due date.

The WIA initiative will overhaul and modernize the job training system by consolidating many separate federal programs. It replaces the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) nationwide on July 1, 2000. WIA is more expansive than JTPA, providing universal access, emphasizing customer choice, and allowing states greater flexibility in structuring their job training programs.

Deferred Compensation Plans

Deferred Compensation plans are authorized under Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Code. This Section permits tax-favored status of contributions for eligible employees. In order to maintain this status, new legislation required that plans maintained by government employer hold all assets and income *in trust, or in custodial accounts or annuity contracts*, for the exclusive benefit of participants and beneficiaries.

How does the Deferred Compensation Plan Work?

With a deferred compensation plan, you postpone receiving (defer) a portion of your salary. It works like this:

- You decide, within certain legal limits, how much of your income you want to defer.
- Your employer will reduce your paycheck before income tax by that amount and forward it to your Deferred Comp. Provider/s on a regular basis.
- Contributions are invested in one or more of the investment options offered under the program. If your employer and plan allow it, you can select the investment options yourself.
- The contributions and any earnings that accumulate over the years are not taxed until you receive them. That's usually at retirement when you may be in a lower tax bracket.
- Your employer's deferred compensation plan has no effect on Social Security. Your Social Security contributions and benefits will be based on your total pay, including the amounts paid into the deferred compensation plan.

Your Employer's Deferred Compensation Plan Offers Important Benefits:

Tax-Deferred Contributions and Accumulation:

By deferring compensation, you have the opportunity to

- Lower your current income taxes because you postpone paying taxes on contributions and investment earnings until you withdraw them at retirement—a time when you may be in a lower tax bracket,
- Enjoy the advantage of tax-deferred compounding, and
- Accumulate more for retirement than you would with an after-tax retirement savings plan.

To illustrate how contributing toward retirement on a before-tax basis affects your paycheck, let's assume you earn \$30,000 in taxable income annually and you want to defer \$75 from each paycheck to a deferred compensation plan. You're paid every other week—26 times a year.

	Paycheck Before Joining Plan	Paycheck After Joining Plan
Income After Adjustments	\$1,154	\$1,154
Def. Comp. Contribution	-0	-75
Net Taxable Income	1,154	1,079
Federal Income Tax (28%)	-323	-302
Take-home Pay	\$ 831	\$ 777

With deferred compensation, your current federal income tax is reduced, so it only costs you \$54 out-of-pocket to invest \$75.

Meaningful Contribution Limit

Generally, you may defer up to 25% of your gross compensation or \$8,000 per year, whichever is less. Congress recently passed legislation to periodically adjust this \$8,000 limit to reflect inflation. As you near your normal retirement age, you may be able to defer more of your income under a special catch-up provision.

Portability

A 457 deferred compensation plan is "portable." This means that if you go to work for another employer who also maintains an eligible 457 deferred compensation plan, you may be able to transfer your benefits to your new employer's plan. If that isn't possible, you can receive your benefits or leave them in your former employer's plan (if the plan allows this) where they will continue to accumulate tax-deferred. (457 benefits cannot be rolled over into an IRA.)

If you choose to take your benefits, the distribution will be taxable in the year you receive the money. However, if your benefits are paid out in a series of periodic payments, you will only pay income tax on the amount received each year.

Getting Started

This article has provided only the highlights of deferred compensation as offered by your employer, The State of Rhode Island. Please contact either your personnel office or the Office of State Employee Benefits (222-3160) for further details and to obtain the plan telephone numbers.

A message to
Rhode Island State Employees
who are unsure about joining
BlueCHiP.



BlueCHiP is an innovative health plan with the quality and benefits that you have come to expect from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. It's the plan with lots of terrific benefits.

With BlueCHiP you'll have your choice of over 2,700 of Rhode Island's top physicians. And since most participate in our other health plans, your transition to BlueCHiP is easy. You'll even have the flexibility to seek care out of the network.

With our emphasis on prevention, you'll be healthier. And, with low out-of-pocket costs, you'll be happier.

To find out more about BlueCHiP call 831-6550 or 1-800-327-6152. You can also visit our website at www.bcbsri.com



BlueCHiP is offered by Coordinated Health Partners, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. Both are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

When given a choice, Rhode Islanders choose us.



When Rhode Islanders look for health insurance, they turn to us. That's why we insure over 50% of the state's population, under our commercial and senior plans. Nearly 39,000 of our members are employed by the State of Rhode Island.

There's good reason for this overwhelming support – Rhode Islanders know a good thing when they see it. They know that we've been providing the best in health care coverage for over 60 years. They know that we have the state's largest provider networks, including nearly every doctor you'd want to see in Rhode Island.

And they know that we offer the widest choice of plans in the state.

This includes four plans just for seniors. These senior plans give members dental, hearing, vision and prescription drug coverage, for a combination of benefits no other company offers.

Our coordinated care plan, BlueCHiP, promotes good health by encouraging a strong doctor-patient relationship. With a primary care doctor coordinating your health care, you'll get all the care you need, before any condition turns into a serious – and costly – illness. We back it all up with the best customer service in the state. The National Management Information System (NMIS) reports that our percentage of "very satisfied" customers is higher than that of similar plans. And Kiplinger's reports that our fee-for-service plan was rated #2 in the country in customer satisfaction, against 750 other plans.



But if you're a typical Rhode Islander, you're also a smart consumer – you'll want to see for yourself. Be our guest! Compare any of our plans with our competitors'. You'll find that we offer the best benefits and best service. Once you compare, you know why thousands of Rhode Islanders choose us whenever they have a choice.

In the unlikely event you're not already enrolled in one of our plans, call us today at 401-831-6550 or toll-free at 1-800-327-6152.

Start enjoying better benefits right away. After all, if you have a choice, doesn't it make sense to go with the plan you really want?

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